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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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31 October 1950

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 336

SUBJECT: An Estimate of Soviet and Non-Soviet Reactions to US Nuclear Energy Tests and Probable Consequent Actions and Results

SUMMARY

Soviet diplomacy and propaganda, in developing its "peace" campaign, would utilize forthcoming US nuclear energy tests as further proof of US "aggressive" intentions, whether or not these tests were announced publicly. The absence of any US announcement would enable the USSR to release an important news story and thus capitalize on such publicity for propaganda purposes.

In Europe and Britain, general reaction to such tests will be favorable as an indication of continuing US leadership in atomic weapons which they regard as their greatest protection against Soviet aggression. Absence of any official US announcement might cause NATO allies of the US to feel that the US does not appreciate their stake in European defense. In any event, Soviet propaganda following the atomic tests will be of little significance in Western Europe.

There will be no significant reaction in the Near and Middle East to such tests, announced or unannounced, except in India where there will be renewed criticism of US atomic policy. Moreover, Soviet propaganda will have little effect in this area.

Little significant reaction will be provoked in the Far East aside from Japan, where increasing US military capabilities will encourage closer alignment with the US. Soviet attempts to exploit these tests for propaganda purposes throughout the Far East will not have any value to the USSR whether or not there have been US public announcements.

Note: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

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1. Soviet Reaction.

On the basis of previous Soviet propaganda behavior in connection with past announcements of US atomic weapons, it may be assumed that Soviet diplomacy and propaganda will utilize new tests as further proof of US "aggressive" intentions as compared with the "peaceful" intentions of the USSR. The USSR, without mentioning any specific weapons or revealing any details which Soviet intelligence might have obtained, will direct its activity to press for the outlawry of nuclear energy weapons. It is possible, however, that latest US atomic developments might not be fully exploited for fear of proclaiming further potential US strength, especially to peoples in the Satellite states.

The US nuclear energy program has always been a key target for infiltration, primarily for purposes of espionage. Prior knowledge that these tests are being undertaken might increase Communist infiltration efforts but not to any great degree. The major Communist effort will be expended in attempting to collect information rather than to sabotage the Task Force or related installations.

It is worth noting that Soviet propaganda did not react immediately to US A-bomb and H-bomb announcements. In the case of the H-bomb, the Soviet home audience was not informed for approximately five weeks and then in terms intended to minimize the significance of the US development. Doubts were expressed concerning the potential existence of the H-bomb and of the "new atomic weapons." There has been no Soviet propaganda reaction to the US announcement that the Eniwetok proving grounds would be used on a permanent basis.

In its propaganda to the Satellite and world-wide audiences, which was kept to a minimum, the USSR claimed that it would soon have the "know-how" of the "super-bomb." Also the USSR, in attempting to divide the Western Powers, developed the propaganda theme that the US was not sharing its atomic secrets and was, in fact, using them to intimidate its own allies.

The USSR scarcely exploited its possession of an A-bomb as a primarily propaganda asset. President Truman's announcement was followed by only the briefest confirmation of the report and little or no comment, even though Soviet possession of such a weapon might be considered an excellent way of countering lagging confidence in Soviet strength, compared to that of the US, throughout the Soviet orbit.

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In the event of a public announcement of US nuclear energy tests, Soviet diplomacy would be most likely to concentrate on such developments as "proof" of US aggressive intentions in support of its "peace" campaign, especially the World Peace Partisans' appeal for the interdiction of all weapons. The USSR would especially utilize this line of argument in the United Nations in order to strengthen its proposal for the control of atomic energy. At the same time Soviet propaganda, while only mentioning the new weapons and their capabilities in the broadest terms, will probably cast doubt on their effectiveness. In addition, efforts would be made to provoke suspicion among US Atlantic Pact allies that, since the US was not sharing its atomic secrets, it intended to achieve ultimate domination over Soviet as well as all Western countries.

If no public announcement of the tests is made, Soviet diplomatic and propaganda reaction would follow the same general lines. If the US should fail to inform its Western allies of its intention to conduct such tests, and if foreign observers should be excluded, Soviet propaganda would have an excellent opportunity to exploit consequent Western irritation. Finally, absence of any US announcement might enable the USSR to be the first to publicize a news event of world-wide interest. By capitalizing on the attention such a story would attract, they could expose their propaganda to a much larger audience.

2. European Reaction.

a. In Western Europe, although most people will be completely apathetic to US atomic tests, responsive groups will be gratified over continuing US progress in atomic research and greater US military capabilities against the Soviet bloc. Also many people will speculate whether the tests involve the hydrogen bomb. There will be encouragement for Western European hopes that Soviet aggression can be deterred, and, to a small degree, this will help to strengthen the will to resist.

In Germany, although the general reaction will be favorable, Socialists are likely to fear that the tests are subtle threats directed at the USSR and their concern over Soviet atomic progress will be revived.

In France, the reaction to the tests will be more favorable if the US announcement gives some indication of their degree of success and of their importance to the development of atomic weapons.

If there is no official US announcement, resentment and suspicion might arise in ordinarily friendly Western European quarters. There would be a disposition to feel that the US does not appreciate the Western European stake

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in defense against the Soviet bloc, and each government might suspect the other governments had been made privy to the secrets of the tests. In addition, silence in Washington would seem to many Europeans to support the Soviet contention that the US is planning a preventive war. The Communists would have a clearer field for spreading whatever propaganda they chose, and non-Communists would criticize the US for giving the Communists this opportunity.

Soviet propaganda following the atomic tests will be generally of little consequence in Northern and Western Europe. Soviet propaganda will be slightly more effective, however, if there has not been a public US announcement of the tests.

Scandinavian reaction to US atomic tests will be favorable even if there is no public announcement, because they will be encouraged by such important evidence of growing US military strength. Also, they will hope that, as far as security will permit, the US will share the results of such tests with the NATO nations.

b. British reaction to US nuclear energy tests will be largely favorable since they regard US leadership in atomic weapons as vital in deterring the USSR from aggression in Western Europe. Nevertheless, there will be some unexpressed uneasiness over the continuing development of mass destruction weapons among many British people who are aware of the vulnerability of their island. Also there will be some adverse comment in the doctrinaire minority wing of the Labour Party, which does not fully trust the foreign or military policies of a "capitalist" state. Whether or not there is a public announcement will be of minor significance, although the shock effect of a news leak from Moscow would have an unfavorable effect on the British, especially those in official circles, who wish to regain the close collaboration on nuclear weapons developments that was instituted during the war. How the USSR interprets the tests will be of little or no importance in Britain.

3. Near and Middle Eastern Reaction.

There would be no significant reaction in the Near and Middle East to nuclear energy tests, announced or unannounced, except in the Indian subcontinent. In general, the governments and people would view the tests favorably as evidence that the US was making an effort to maintain its lead over the USSR in the development of nuclear energy weapons.

The Indian reaction to the tests would be one of strong disapproval. The government and the articulate Indian public deplore the existence of the atom bomb and condemn its use. The Indians apparently feel that US supremacy in the field of atomic weapons merely strengthens those elements in the US opposed

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to any sort of rapprochement with the USSR. Moreover, they resent the fact that the bomb was used against an Oriental rather than a European or white people. The Indian press and probably members of the government -- especially Nehru -- would allege that the nuclear energy tests, by acting as a reminder of US preparedness, constitute a reckless intent to intimidate the Communist world.

Pakistan would take a much more realistic view of the tests, and there would be no adverse reaction either in official circles or among Pakistanis as a whole. Nevertheless, the pro-Communist and anti-US press in Pakistan is disproportionately great, and reaction in that element of the Pakistani press would be similar to the reaction in the Indian press generally.

The reaction of the governments and people of the Near and Middle East to US nuclear energy tests would, in general, be unaffected by Soviet propaganda on the subject. Soviet allegations of US bellicosity would fit in well with the reaction in India and among a certain element in Pakistan. Soviet propaganda that "American victories mean only destruction for the nations America protects" would also find a receptive audience in both countries because of reaction to US bombing on Korea. Thus, in effect, Soviet propaganda would merely intensify somewhat the feeling which already existed in India and among certain Pakistanis.

4. Far Eastern Reaction.

Knowledge of the conduct of US nuclear energy tests in the spring of 1951, whether derived from official US announcement or as a consequence of Soviet propaganda exploitation, would provoke little significant reaction in the Far East. In the light of known over-all US political, economic and military capabilities in the Far East and the comparative capabilities of the Soviet Union, the increase in US military potential implied by the tests would be viewed only as a small addition to an already rapidly developing strength.

The Japanese, because of their experience in World War II, have displayed a consistently keen interest in atomic warfare developments. The conduct of tests implying the development of even more destructive atomic weapons would tend to increase Japanese apprehensions for their future security, in view of their fear that Japan might be a prospective battlefield in the event of a third World War. Nevertheless, since other factors continue to orient Japan toward the US and such orientation will probably be stronger in the spring of 1951 than at present, knowledge of US nuclear energy tests probably will arouse both hope and confidence in the ability of the US to maintain a margin of superiority over the USSR in atomic capabilities. In other non-Communist parts of the Far East--where governments and peoples look to the US for world leadership--the

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tests would be mildly reassuring as regards the US ability to deter further Soviet-inspired aggression.

It is anticipated that Communist governments and propagandists in the Far East would exhibit little significant reaction to the US tests. The Chinese Communist have given minimal attention to the US atomic program to date and may be expected to follow the Soviet line by belittling the military value of nuclear weapons and at the same time citing the tests as proof of "aggressive aims" on the part of the US. The occasion of the tests, however, might be used by the Chinese Communists to launch their own diplomatic and propaganda campaign in support of the USSR's proposals on the international control of atomic energy.

On the other hand, Soviet attempts to exploit US nuclear energy tests for propaganda purposes could not achieve favorable results for the USSR in the Far East, whether or not the tests had been accompanied by US public announcements. Soviet allegations that the tests were proof of US aggressive intentions would have no appreciable effect on the situation in Korea. Soviet propaganda directed toward Japan would encounter a fairly sophisticated audience, quite aware of Soviet atomic capabilities, but not impressed by Soviet propaganda attacks on the US. It has been indicated that the Japanese believe the Soviet Union itself must make the next move in an effort to promote world peace and that such an effort, to be genuine, should include a considerable compromise of present Soviet position on international control of atomic energy. Soviet exploitation of the US tests would be completely ineffective in the Philippines. In other parts of Southeast Asia, since the general line of Soviet propaganda--picturing the US as an aggressive imperialist power--can be supported by "evidence" closer to local experience than nuclear energy tests, the effectiveness of Communist propaganda would not be appreciably increased by the availability of this new "evidence."

5. Long-Range Effect on Soviet Policy.

The long-range effect on Soviet policy as a result of the tests will not be distinguishable from the general effect of any increase in over-all Western strength. Increased Western strength will cause the USSR to intensify its efforts to equal US achievements in the nuclear energy field. If the Soviet Union decided to engage in global warfare, this decision would be basically determined by the USSR's measure of its own preparedness relative to that of the US and its allies. Present prospects are, however, that the USSR will continue to follow its policy of political pressure and intimidation backed by the threat of armed force as evolved since the end of World War II.

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